

ROBERT BERGEN

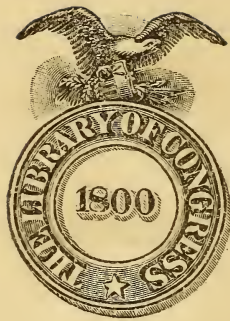


GEORGE H. EISENHART

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BY
GEORGE H. EISENHART

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DEDICATED TO
THE FATHERS OF THE KEYSTONE STATE

ROBERT BERGEN

The county of Montgomery has many beautiful and fertile valleys. In one of these valleys nestled the quiet and complacent village of Shomock. And it was justified in its complacency, as the people were prosperous, honest, law-abiding and happy. Want was seldom heard of, and, if a family was so unfortunate as to be in need, the distress was speedily relieved by their neighbors, who were a generous people in many respects.

The people of the village and the valley were related in one way or another until it resembled a huge family, and what interested one interested all. The custom still prevailed in the valley, as it did in other sections years ago, to keep farms in the same family, generation after generation. The migratory disease was almost unknown to the people of the valley, and, if a young man did leave the farm and enter another vocation, his family never quite forgave him. In many ways the people were not different from their forebears who cleared the valley of the virgin forest. The most noticeable change was the introduction of modern machinery for the farm. They were ever eager to buy implements that saved labor and made them money. And when they had a

dollar it was no small task to separate the owner and the eagle.

William Bergen was a market gardener, so was his father and grandfather before him. The produce from the Bergen farm enjoyed more than a local reputation, and it came by it justly, as Bergen had the earliest and best vegetables in the surrounding country. Each week he drove twenty-five miles to the county-seat and disposed of his truck at prices always a few cents above market prices, because his goods could be depended on. Being in contact with city life two days a week gave William Bergen a distinction in his home town, and he took advantage of it. His opinions were respected and in his younger days, so it was said, he sometimes enforced them with his fists. He was a church official, a bank director and in other matters he was at the front. He was the father of two children, a girl and a boy, and in his cold way he was proud of his family; to be otherwise he would have considered effeminate. His chief ambition, which was the ambition of his neighbors, was to accumulate wealth.

Bergen, with his neighbors, believed in education, but only sufficient to carry a man through life. To attain this efficiency was not difficult. If a youth could compute the price of a steer at five and one-quarter cents per pound that was sufficient in the branch

of arithmetic, and if he could read the Bible and the weekly paper he was competent in letters. Consequently, the schools were antiquated and the homes lacked the one thing to make them cheerful—well filled bookshelves. This standard of education had been handed down from father to son until it was an unwritten law, and to change a belief or law in Shomock was only short of a miracle. They said what was good enough for father is good enough for me. They adhered to this saying in education, politics and religion.

On the Sabbath the people attended church, mainly from force of habit and to meet their friends, talk about crops and the price of hogs. They contributed sparingly to the pastor's salary, as they held to the antiquated theory that a preacher should support himself and preach for the love of it. As to benevolences of the church they gave niggardly, as they said no one was justified in being poor. And as to the heathen, who had not heard the Gospel, that was no fault of the people in Shomock. If the heathen was happy without the Gospel, why try to convert him to Christianity. It was considered a poor business policy to waste money for the uplift of a benighted people.

Thomas Sigmund was pastor of the Shomock Church for the last fifteen years. He had long since learned that his salary de-

pended on preaching sermons that were agreeable to the official board. The rest of the congregation seemed to be satisfied as well, as they slept with comfort during the services. The pastor hinted on several occasions that he would like to have a vacation, as he had a desire for years to spend a month in Florida. The leave was never granted, as the official board did not see why he should have a vacation when they did not. At the annual meeting he brought the subject of a vacation up again, and hinted very delicately if it was not granted there were other fields where he could labor. The officials did not want their pastor to resign and concluded the easiest way was to grant him a vacation. He was unanimously granted a month's leave.

The vacation was only too short for the pastor. It was a profitable month and he had gathered many new ideas and methods which he intended to use in his church. On his return the people saw a change had taken place in his manner. They could not describe the change in the man but it was there. The outward evidence was that he walked with a spring in his step they had not observed before, and there was an assurance in his manner and conversation that was new. The first Sunday after his return the church was crowded to welcome him home. They missed him, so they said, and it was good to see him

in his accustomed place. There was a force and conviction in the way he read the first hymn and the people looked to make sure it was their pastor. When he announced his theme, "The obligations of church officials," the congregation looked at him in astonishment. They questioned if it was possible their pastor would criticise the conditions that existed for so many years. He explained in no uncertain terms the duty of officials and people. It was a searching discourse and the members had to confess they fell short of their obligations. A few took exception to the sermon, not that it was not true, but the truth was thrust upon them without the usual sugar coating. During the next week the community was busy discussing the sermon, and the officials deplored their action in granting the pastor a vacation.

The following Sunday the congregation was startled when the pastor announced he would preach on the evils of the liquor traffic. Officials and members straightened in their seats and waited for the unfolding of the sermon. As he continued with his discourse some became angry, and others, whose consciences were not dead, blushed for shame that they had not openly opposed the business they knew was causing so much evil. It was a splendid exposition of the evil and no one could take offence who was

anxious to destroy the evil monster. The opposition was aggrieved because an idea they and their fathers upheld was attacked. They said hotels were a necessity. After the benediction men gathered in groups and gave vent to their wrath, or rejoiced over the sermon, as the temper of the group dictated. Several of the officials spoke to the pastor and pointed out he made a mistake to preach a sermon on the liquor traffic. He stood on his rights and pointed out it was his privilege to speak on any subject he felt was wrong. And, if they wanted to do their duty as officials, they must uphold him and fight the evil. Sigmund spoke in all kindness and his assistants went away defeated and ashamed but not in sympathy with the cause.

The sermon provoked discussion in every home, but the tension was especially oppressive in the home of William Bergen. He ate his dinner in silence, and when addressed by a member of his family he answered in monosyllables.

"William, what did you think of the sermon?" Mary Bergen asked after each had taken his chair in the sitting-room after dinner.

"Think of it," he snapped in anger, "I think he has no business to preach about things that do not concern him. Politics and the granting of hotel licenses are no themes

for a sermon. To my mind he is a consummate fool."

"William, you use strong and disrespectful language toward your pastor," she remonstrated.

"Strong language," he hissed with suppressed anger, "I have not said half what I feel and perhaps it better remain unsaid."

"Did he say anything that was not true?"

"It is not the truth or falsity of the sermon I object to. My objection is he has no business to preach along those lines."

"Then you admit that the use of alcohol causes much sorrow and produces great evil?"

"We all know that."

"Who will correct the evil if the church does not? You surely will not deny the preacher the right to attack sin wherever it exists."

"Certainly he has a right to preach about sin, but this particular problem is outside a preacher's sphere."

"If the church shall not fight the evil, who would you suggest should do it?"

"The judges of our courts."

"How can they do it? You have said yourself our judges take their drink. It seems to me a man who indulges in an evil is a poor instrument to correct that evil." She said this with all kindness.

He was hard pressed, and if there was one

thing he hated more than another it was to be defeated in a verbal controversy. He was silent for some time.

"If the judges refuse to remedy the evil, laws can be passed to correct the wrong. If the people are anxious to get rid of the drink question they can do it through the legislature. The men at the capitol are our servants."

"A number of bills have been introduced in the legislature to grant the people local option, but they were defeated, and I heard men say they were glad they did not pass," she reminded him and the thrust went home, as he was one of the men who was gratified when the local option bills failed to pass.

"The time to get rid of strong drink is not here. When the time is ripe for the reform it will be wiped out." In triumph.

"The question is an ancient one, and it seems to me the country is a long time making up its mind to get rid of the great destroyer of happiness."

"You seem thoroughly in favor of the movement, perhaps you can suggest how and when it should be wiped out," his anger getting the better of him.

"Now is the time."

"Explain how you would go about closing the hotels and saloons."

"Why, William, it is simplicity itself. All you have to do is to refuse to sign the hotel

men's application for a license. That would do away with the hotels in our midst and if every community would do the same we could get rid of them inside of a year."

"That would be a way, I must own, but we will never close the hotels that way as every man can always find twelve men who will sign his application."

"William," placing her hand on his shoulder, "do you think the hotel men in our community could get twelve men to sign if the church members refused to place their names on the paper?"

"I do not know, but I suppose they could. Mary, do you mean to suggest that I should not sign an application if I was asked? Please do not raise that subject, as we have gone over it before now." He had to fight to keep his temper under control. Their conversation was exceedingly uncomfortable to him.

"Listen, William; do you think it is the proper thing for a church member and official to sign an application?"

"I have done it for years and have not felt any the worse for it."

"What you have done cannot be undone. Are you going to sign this spring? I take it that the obligation to which you gave assent before God and the congregation, the day you were installed deacon, is binding seven days in the week."

He had not thought of his obligation from the day he assumed office until now, and he had to acknowledge he was not consistent if he signed an application. But pride prevented him from doing the manly thing.

"I do not see that there is anything inconsistent in my action." The next instant he hated himself for being untruthful, and he was conscious he lowered himself in the sight of his wife. He was proud in spirit and considered it unmanly to surrender, and especially to a woman, though she was his wife.

Mary Bergen was crushed to think that her husband refused to do the right thing when he knew it. A long silence followed.

"My dear," she finally said, "if your obligation as a church official will not deter you from signing the application, and, if my love has no weight with you, will you refuse to sign it for the sake of your children?"

He gave a start.

"What have our children got to do with my attitude or action toward the question?"

"Everything; you would not care to think that our son might be overcome with the evil stuff."

"Have no fear, Mary; a Bergen never loses his self-respect. No Bergen ever indulged to excess."

"Perhaps not, but there is no telling what may happen."

“Never.”

“I pray not, but you could not advise your son not to drink.”

“A drink now and then never hurts a man; you must know when to stop.”

“Suppose he should be so unfortunate as to lose his self-control. You heard this morning that one out of every five boys are sacrificed to the demon. What if our boy should be one of them?”

The idea staggered him for a minute. That it was possible he could not deny, but he did not think it probable.

“Mary, you are wrought up over the silly talk of this morning. Our boy will not bring discredit on the Bergen name.”

“The sermon of this morning will not be forgotten, and the man who signs a hotel license application this year will lower himself in the eyes of his neighbors. Not only the man but his family will be affected, and none more than his children, who are helpless to prevent it.” She was intensely in earnest.

“Come, come, Mary; you are unduly excited, and our discussion will not solve the problem,” with indifference.

“This is not the first time I have thought of this evil and I have prayed that the pastor would preach a sermon on the subject and arouse the community.”

“His preaching will not destroy the hotels, and I am sure it will not change my opinion.”

The wife knew only too well that his opinion was not changed. She also knew that his conscience told him what to do but that he was a coward to do the right. The silence that followed got on his nerves, and, to end the unpleasantness, he made the excuse that he had an errand at the barn. There was nothing in the barn that interested him, and the conversation just ended would not leave him. He knew his duty, but a Bergen never changed his line of conduct. Besides, he had to admit to himself, and it was with shame, that he did not have the moral courage to refuse to sign an application. The one thing in their conversation that persisted to disturb him was the future of his boy. If he for one moment thought there was a possibility that his boy might fall he would take a decided position against the stuff, cost what it would. He loved his boy, in a way, and had great hopes for him. And if there was the remotest chance that he would ever be affected by the evil thing he would fight it with all his power. The possibility was a disturbing one. He examined, as far as possible, every side of the situation and forced himself to say his boy would not bring discredit on the Bergen name.

The father loved his son in his cold way, but the mother loved him as only a mother can. She saw the temptations that bedecked her son's path more clearly than the father

did, and she prayed daily that none would be strong enough to drag him from the path of right. At fourteen she still had her boy's confidence and he came to her with every trouble. There was a freedom and openness between them that was beautiful as it is rare.

Robert graduated from the public school and was anxious to continue his studies in the state normal school in the fall. The father objected and pointed out he needed him on the farm. Besides, Robert had more education than he had. The boy persisted and the mother came to his aid.

"Father, why not give our boy the opportunity to continue his studies? We can well assist him."

"It is not the question of assistance. If we give the boy an education he will not return to the farm."

"And if he does not, we can farm without him."

"So we can, but you know it is not the fashion among us to send our boys to higher institutions of learning."

"Fashion!" she exclaimed. "Do you not think we have followed long enough in the footsteps of our forebears in the matter of education? I think the times demand that we give our boys a better education."

The husband was startled with these new and advanced ideas. Women were not supposed to advocate new ideas; they were to

be content to live like their mothers, in subjection to their husbands. He looked upon the suggestions of his wife as nothing short of heresy.

The husband and wife discussed the subject in detail. He knew she was in the right and he was eager that his boy should advance. But to yield was to destroy an old custom, which was as painful to him as parting with a life-long friend. It was finally decided that Robert should go to the normal school in the fall. Before he left for school he and his mother had a long talk and she pointed out the many issues he had to meet alone. Above all, she made him promise that he would never touch any intoxicating drink. He gave his word of honor and she felt sure he would keep it, as he had always done.

The next four years slipped by and graduation day was at hand before they realized it. He stood well toward the head of his class and was selected one of the speakers at the commencement exercises. His parents were present and they were proud of their boy.

A week after his return home he startled his parents by expressing a desire to go to the university. The father, in no uncertain tone, said he would not assist him. The father said the training he had fitted him for any kind of work. The mother was pleased the boy had ambition to continue his studies,

but she knew the father would not assist him. No further reference was made to the subject until two weeks before the university opened. They were seated around the table, after the evening meal was finished, taking a short rest before doing the evening chores.

"Father," Robert said, when a pause occurred in the conversation, "the university opens in two weeks and I would like to take the course in electrical engineering."

"My son, you may want to go, and you can go if you like, but I will not advance you any money. I have given you advantages I dreamed of when I was a boy and I hinted as much to my father, but that is as far as I got. You have an education that is not equalled by a young man in this section, and still you are not satisfied. I think you better rid yourself of taking the course." And he pushed his chair back as though to leave the table.

"A moment, please, father. I appreciate all you have done for me and I will re-pay you when I get started. I am only eighteen and by the time I complete the course at the university I will be twenty-two. If I finish the course, I shall earn not less than a hundred a month and the advance is unlimited. If I do not get the special training I shall plod along at half the salary and no advancement in sight. So, taking it all in all, I think it would be a good investment."

"It all sounds very pretty, but, if you cannot get through life credibly with the education you have, more will not help you. I will not assist you in a university course." There was a finality in his tone all recognized, and the son knew further argument was useless.

"You will offer no objection if I work my way through the university?"

"None whatever, my boy, but I think you are wasting your time." And he left the room.

A silence that was painful ensued after the father left the room. His mother and sister were anxious that he should pursue his studies and felt sorry that his father opposed it.

"I have a hundred I saved from my pin money. I want you to take it; it will tide you over until you can get some employment," the sister said eagerly.

"Thanks, sis, but you may need it. I have sufficient until I get work of some kind. Have no fear I will complete the course, but I could do better work if I did not have to think of finances."

"You go, my boy, and do not forget that you have a mother." Her manner and words conveyed more than she said and put added spirit in the boy.

The day for his departure for the distant city was at hand, and the mother and the son had a heart-to-heart talk. Again he promised

to abstain from the use of alcoholic beverages and avoid the sins of the great city.

Life at the university was vastly different from the life at the normal school, and he was perplexed for several days. He adjusted himself to his new surroundings and in a short time he had sufficient work to pay his way. His one ambition was to finish the year with a good average, and he devoted every possible hour to his studies. At the end of the year he stood third in his class, but that did not satisfy him, and he determined he would be second or head the next year.

The parents were disappointed when he wrote that he had found employment for the summer in an electrical plant. He promised to be home one week before school opened in the fall.

The second year the course was more difficult and he worked harder than ever, and at the end of the year he held the coveted first place in the class, and it was not wrested from him during the rest of the course.

Robert insisted that his parents attend the commencement exercises, as he was to make the address for his class, and he wanted his parents to be there. The father was proud of his son's achievement and boasted of it to his neighbors, but he did not mention that he refused to aid him. Now that his boy had completed the course he felt mean that he had not assisted him. The mother insisted that they should attend the exercises.

Robert met them at the railroad terminal and gave them in charge of an undergraduate, and they were taken to the opera house. They had never been in so great and handsome a building, and they were awed. After a long wait, the graduates filed in and William and Mary eagerly scanned each face. "There he is," the mother cried and pinched the arm of her husband. "Is he not fine looking in his cap and gown?" with enthusiasm. "Yes, yes," in a strange tone, and he had occasion to use his handkerchief.

A number of men spoke, but William and Mary came to hear their boy. He made the important address of the day as far, as they were concerned. After a long wait, Robert's name was called and his class applauded with a good will. He delivered his oration in a creditable manner and the great audience burst into applause, and none more heartily than his parents.

"That was my boy," William said with pride to the man next to him. The keen edge of his joy was a trifle blunted when he recalled the boy had worked his way and nothing but his stubbornness made him withhold his aid. After the exercises they spent several days in the city seeing the sights and had an exceedingly pleasant time.

"I will be home in two days, mother," Robert said as he took his parents to the station. "There are several things I must

see to before I can leave. I have a position and must see the president of the company before I go away."

"And is your ambition realized?" the father asked.

"It is; I get a hundred a month to begin."

"That is splendid," and again the father felt a trifle mean in his attitude toward his son.

On leaving the terminal he met two of his class-mates. They were on their way to lunch, and insisted that he accompany them. It was an exclusive restaurant, and Robert was so busy studying the unusual surroundings and the people at the various tables that he paid no attention to the order that was given the waiter.

"Here is to the best man of our class," as they raised their glasses. Robert bowed and before he knew what he was about he had emptied half the contents of his glass. The taste was foreign to him, and in an instant he knew it contained alcohol. The admonition of his mother leaped to his mind, and he thrust the glass from him. In a moment or two a tingle that was entirely new to him touched every nerve of his body. It was an exhilarating thrill after the tension of the last month, and his body seemed to gain renewed vigor every minute. Everything was changed from a moment before. Life had a new joy. The sensation was fascinating, and

somehow he felt that he would like to enjoy it again.

The three separated outside the restaurant and Robert made his way to the university. The new experience was so novel that he went over it again and again, and each time the desire was stronger to repeat the new experience. "I now understand why men drink; it is for the pleasant sensation. And there can be no wrong in the use of it if you do not let it get the better of you. No, I am not afraid it will ever conquer me; a Bergen never loses his self-control." His father's boast came to his rescue. And why not take another drink and prove that you are master of yourself, the suggestion came to him. He thrust the idea to a side; some other day when he had more leisure, to-day he was busy. That evening, after he had finished his work at the university, the idea came to him again. "And why should I not?" he mused.

Two blocks down the street was a saloon that was frequented by the students. Before he was really aware of it, he stood in front of the bar and called for a mild wine. He drank it eagerly and left the place at once. Again every nerve was alive, his mind seemed more active, the joy of life was doubled, and, on the whole, he enjoyed the effect. After the sensation had left him and he lay on his bed, he thought it strange that his mother's advice did not come to him when he entered the

saloon. Shame overtook him and he conjectured what his mother would say if she knew that he had broken his word. "She shall not know and I will not do it again."

Two days later, on his way to the station, every saloon seemed to invite him to enter, but he determined not to and he conquered the temptation. On his way home he promised himself that he would not enter a saloon again. This helped him to regain his self-respect and gave him courage to meet his mother.

The week at home was very pleasant, and he was glad to renew old acquaintances after a year's absence. With it all he was impatient to return to the city and get to work; at least, he tried to convince himself of this. The truth was, he was eager to renew the sensation that fascinated him.

"My boy, I am proud of your splendid manhood and the mental training you have acquired, and your future is exceedingly promising," she said the morning he was ready to leave for the city. "You will meet new conditions and make the acquaintance of a new class of men. Many things will arise that will test your character to the breaking point. But I know you will be as strong in the future as you have been in the past. And, my son," placing her hand on his shoulder, "if you want the best in life, never touch alcohol. Men who use it do not attain

the highest places. I need not mention to you the effect of drink; you know more about these things than I do. My son will not bring sorrow to his mother's heart on account of it, and always remember that I am praying for you," and she looked him square in the eyes.

"I will always bear your loving words in mind, mother," and his lips trembled a trifle, but he failed to return the look. That he did not return her look, and it was the first time he had not, she put down to his being slightly overcome by her words.

The next morning the president of the Cosmos Electrical Company introduced him to his fellow-workers in the office. He was given the plans and specifications of a power plant and told to make an estimate of the cost of the plant. The work was interesting and his superior complimented him on his first day's work. On leaving the building, in the evening, the man who sat next to Robert, and who had given him a number of suggestions, accompanied him up the street. He was companionable and Robert had taken a liking to him. As they approached the corner of the street his friend said casually, "Come in and have a drink. I stop in every evening on my way home. It is rather an exclusive place and patronized by a splendid crowd of men." Robert failed to say no, though his promise came to mind. He was anxious to see the place and to experience

the effect of alcohol. He was tired and a drink would not hurt, he knew when to stop.

It was a place out of the ordinary, as saloons go. It was filled with well-dressed men, but there was no loud talking or boisterousness. They were a congenial class of men, they took a few drinks and went about their business. Robert was introduced to several men and his friend was known to many. The place lacked the usual ill smell of a saloon, and, taking it as a whole, it had a pleasing effect. Robert took a drink and then excused himself.

He was troubled after leaving the place that he had broken his word so soon. He argued and weighed the question time and again, if he should or should not drink. The men in the saloon came to mind, he saw no drunken men in the place, they were prosperous, they were happy, and, no doubt, frequented the place for years and were none the worse. Why could he not do the same? He was master of himself and a drink would not hurt him. Did not his father hold the same views, and he never drank to excess, and he was no less a man than his father.

The next evening he went to the same saloon and took one drink and went on his way. This he did regularly for three months. The one drink failed to produce the desired effect and he increased it to two drinks, and, at the expiration of six months, he had to

take three drinks to enjoy the tingling sensation that one drink developed in the beginning. In the meantime, his work proved satisfactory and his salary was increased twenty-five a month. At the end of the first year he was sent out to look after the erection of plants, and his work proved satisfactory to the company.

At the expiration of four years he was made assistant chief engineer with a salary of thirty-five hundred a year. He was gratified but not satisfied, and aimed to be chief engineer, and, eventually, be one of the executives. This ambition was within the range of possibility, as his work was highly satisfactory to the company. Robert had not only increased his salary but also his capacity to drink, and he consumed no less than ten drinks every day. He took a drink before he reported for duty, two during lunch, and the rest in the evening. With it all he never acquired the habit of loafing in the saloon, and he detested a man who was under the influence of drink.

Church life did not play as important a part in his life as it should have done. He did attend serivces, but not regularly. The church where he did go was a live one and did many things to hold the young people in the church and bring strangers in. It was at one of the social functions of the church that he met a charming young woman. Hereto-

fore he had not paid any attention to the fair sex, as he was too busy with his work, but this woman awakened his latent affections. A close acquaintance was followed by his declaration of love, and she accepted his offer of marriage. She exacted but one promise—that he must not use strong drink. Margaret Swan believed Robert Bergen to be the finest and noblest man she had ever met, and could not conceive that his lips ever touched alcohol. She exacted the promise to make doubly sure that their future would not be clouded or their affection killed by alcohol. He freely gave his promise, as he felt a man could and would do anything for so charming and accomplished a woman. And she did not for an instant think he would not keep his word of honor.

The first evening in their own home was one of intense pleasure. That they should always have each other was a great joy for both, but especially so for the bride. Robert was so delighted with his wife and new home that he rushed home as soon as the office was closed. He forced himself to go without his evening drink, but the sacrifice cost him a tremendous struggle. The love for his wife helped him to conquer. She counted the hours when he would return, and after the evening meal she would play and sing for him; they would talk about his work and his prospects, or they would read aloud one to

the other. They were exceedingly happy, and her one prayer was that their love would never change.

At the end of six months, however, the routine of being at home every evening slightly palled him, and he was not so prompt in returning home. At first he was only fifteen minutes late, he explained that he missed his usual car; then he was half an hour late, extra work detained him or he did not realize it was so late, or he and one of the officials had a talk about some important work. He always had a plausible excuse and she, having absolute faith in him and hoping for his advancement, never complained. She felt sorry for him that he had to work so hard. The truth of the matter was he longed for the smell and buzz of the bar-room. He indulged his appetite, which he had been fighting so desperately, sparingly, as he knew if he ever lowered himself in the eyes of his wife he could never regain his place in her heart. He exercised the greatest care that she would not detect he had used alcohol, and he succeeded admirably for a year.

One evening, after leaving the office, he met a friend he had not seen for a long time and he prolonged his stay in the saloon; and, before he realized it, he was decidedly under the influence of drink. He became reckless and went home in a maudlin condition. The

key refused to fit the lock of the front door. The good wife had been waiting for him and she flew to the front door and thrust it open, and he nearly fell into the vestibule.

"Excuse me, dearie, I lost my balance when you opened the door," he said with a heavy voice and made for the stairs without kissing her.

One look and she knew what was the cause he could not unlock the door, and that instant the love and joy went out of her heart. Going into the sitting-room, he threw himself on a couch and attempted to explain how it came about he was in this condition. Margaret silenced him and in a few minutes he was asleep.

She fell into a chair and looked at the sleeping man with dull eyes. She could not think, as her mind was benumbed, she only gazed at the man in his drunken stupor. "Is this my husband!" she cried in the agony of her soul. "The man in whom I placed every confidence, the man who is the father of my child! Has he betrayed me, has he deceived me? God." And she gazed at him with an intentness only short of insanity. For three hours she sat without moving and watched the sleeper. Finally he stirred and opened his eyes, and the next instant he sat bolt upright on the couch and looked about the room. In a flash, it was all clear to him.

"Margaret," he cried, and the cry was not unlike a soul in torment.

She did not respond, and he saw the Margaret before him was not the Margaret he had left in the morning. She was pale, the love-light had gone out of her eyes, and a droop had overcome her. That instant he was positive he would never again see the sparkle in her eyes, or the love play on her handsome features. That he crushed her with one blow came upon him with a shock that unmanned him and he buried his face in his hands.

It required many minutes to get control of himself and to invent a lie that would justify his condition. He came and knelt at her side and covered her hand with his, but she drew away from him when his alcoholic breath fanned her cheeks.

"Margaret," he cried in anguish, when he saw she drew away from him, "I know I wounded you beyond measure, but let me explain and you may find it in your heart to forgive me."

"Yes, Robert," she managed to say.

"I have no excuse to offer for my beastly condition. It came about before I was aware of it. We closed a contract, this afternoon, with a firm for a new electrical plant that will cost a million dollars. We were all elated over the success and the president took me out to dinner. That is how it happened."

"But, Robert, was it necessary for you to

go, and, if you did go, were you compelled to drink?"

"It was not necessary, but under the excitement I forgot."

"My dear, will you promise me that you will not drink again?" and she looked him square in the eyes.

"I promise you, Margaret, that I will not break my word again." But the love-light did not return to her eyes after he had given his promise.

"My dear husband," she said, stroking his black hair with a trembling hand, "we have made many plans for the angel God is to give us and I hope the father will not be addicted to this accursed habit and blight his child before it is born."

This was a new idea to the father-to-be and a shock went through him as though he had touched a live electric wire. He was speechless and a pallor crept over his features. The wife was startled in turn, and questioned if he had been deceiving her. Many things she could not explain with satisfaction seemed different now, and she was afraid in her heart of hearts that he used the vile stuff frequently.

"If I thought our little darling would be affected or handicapped in life by the vile poison I would pray the Father to take it unto Himself."

"Surely our child will not suffer because I made one mistake," he said.

"No, I hope not," she said, but her words lacked assurance, and he was afraid she suspected he used it frequently.

"Come, let us put the painful subject aside as best we can, and I shall get you a cup of tea and you will feel better."

The good woman thereafter counted the hours for his return as eagerly as ever, but one thing was ever in her mind—how will he come home? He, in turn, was more tender than ever and frequently talked about the child that was to bless the home. Do what he would, he suspected the bruise he had inflicted had not healed, and he was certain her affection was not as tender as in former days, and the light in her eyes, which always fascinated him, had not returned. In secret he cursed himself for having been such a fool as to return home in a maudlin condition.

He did not drink less after his great mistake, but, instead of imbibing freely after office hours, he indulged during lunch hour, which made it all the worse, as it unfitted him for the exacting duties that were demanded of him.

Shortly after he had changed his drinking hours he was late getting to the office one morning, as he tarried in the saloon longer than usual. He found a note on his desk, signed by the president, saying Robert should come to his office at once.

"In going over that Chicago contract, last evening, I found you made a mistake of five thousand dollars. I do not see how you made the mistake, as it is only a matter of addition."

"I am sorry I made the mistake, but anyone is liable to make an error once in a while," in self-defense.

"Very true," the president said, generously, "but this is not the first mistake you made recently. In that Memphis contract we lost two thousand dollars due to your oversight."

"I do not understand how that came about, Mr. Williams," in confusion.

"Neither do I, and I would not have mentioned it if I had not found this blunder. I could not let this pass."

"I can offer no excuse other than I was in too great a hurry."

"Robert," the president said, kindly, "your numerous errors of late are traced to your excessive indulgence in strong drink. Our work, as you know, requires a clear brain and you cannot have a clear head and drink alcoholic beverages. I had great hopes for you, Robert, when you came in our office, and I looked forward to the time when you would fill one of the executive offices. And this is still in the range of possibility, as I have not lost faith in your ability. But one thing you cannot do, if you want to advance

with us; you must leave alcohol alone." He paused and Robert studied the floor.

"Your future with us depends on you. It is not my place to look over the contracts after you are done with them. We employ you for that purpose, and accuracy is the watchword. I will be perfectly frank with you, if you make another blunder like the one in question you must consider your place vacant."

"It will not happen again, Mr. Williams."

"I trust not, Robert," and he turned to other matters that needed his attention, and Robert left the office.

Robert sat at his desk for a long time and went over the situation. "I am going to quit. I cannot sacrifice my prospects for booze. I am going to be master of myself, and when a Bergen makes up his mind he can do what he pleases," and he started his day's work.

At twelve he did not go out, as he was afraid he could not resist the temptation to take a drink. His nerves were on edge and cried for the stimulant. The fight was on and within an hour his brain was so muddled that he was unfit for work. "Just one, and I will be all right, a man cannot break a habit of years at one stroke. It is impossible," and he rushed from the office to the nearest saloon. He took a drink but that did not satisfy, "two will not hurt," and he took another. He knew he must leave at once, or

he would take the third and fourth. That afternoon he accomplished very little, and what he did do he went over it again and again for fear he had made a mistake.

The instant office hours were over he went to the nearest drinking place and had three drinks. His system cried for more, but he could not meet his wife and smell of drink. He was not as congenial as usual, and the good woman asked if he was worried. No, he was not worried, simply tired, as the work in the office was piled up and he had to get it out of the way. She suggested he retire and get a good night's rest. But he could not rest, as every nerve of his body was pulling and tugging for more alcohol. He tossed from side to side and was tempted to sneak out and get a drink to calm his nerves. It was useless to think of it, as she had not retired. He made numerous attempts to quiet his nerves by exerting his will power, but it was useless and they tormented him all the more.

The question came to him, "Who shall be master, I or drink?" He followed the course that would naturally ensue if drink conquered. He would lose his position, and would never get one as good; his wife and parents would eventually learn his weakness, his wife would be heart-broken and his mother crushed; he would be a reproach to his wife and a disgrace to his mother; his

standing in the community would be gone, not to mention poor health and shortened years. All this he knew followed in the wake if drink conquered, as he had seen it so often and despised the men who had reached the lowest ebb in the social scale. "Shall I be one of that miserable army?" And he trembled for fear it might come true.

His mind pursued the course that was possible if he abstained from drink. There was nothing to prevent him to attain the highest place in his profession, accumulate wealth, be a man of power, a force in the civic life of the community, provide every comfort for his family and educate his children. All this was in his power to accomplish and reason dictated it was the honorable course to follow. He determined to abstain. After the resolution was passed and solemnly confirmed, the suggestion came to him, "Can I stop, or has the habit fastened itself so strongly on me that I have lost control of myself?" The possibility of the loss of his will-power was a shock to him, but he would be master of himself; a Bergen never lost control of himself.

At midnight his wife came into the room and switched the light on. "I heard you sighing and tossing ever since you retired," she said as she stood by the side of the bed, "are you unwell?"

"I am perfectly well, my dear, but I can-

not forget my work; I have an especially hard problem to work out, and I cannot dismiss it from my mind. I will be all right directly."

As she watched his nervous movements and saw the peculiar stare of his eyes, a something told her it was not work that worried him and the thought turned her heart faint.

"You are not feeling well yourself, dear," and he made as though to get up.

"Do not think of getting up; I am only concerned about you," and, with a trembling hand, she turned the light off and left the room.

"'I am only concerned about you,' what did she intend to convey? Does she know or suspect the truth? If she did not suspect anything why did she turn pale and why did her hand tremble when she touched the electric button? Is it possible I did not succeed in deceiving her?" The thought benumbed him. "Oh! that I might go back to the days when all was love and joy," he groaned. But he had destroyed her happiness by doing the thing she hated.

The next morning he felt wretched and was irritable, but he controlled himself so she would not surmise why he was in such a hurry to leave for the office. On leaving the house, he went to the nearest place to get a drink to steady his raw nerves, and he

promised himself that he would not touch it for the rest of the day. His resolution was made of poor material, and before going to the office he had two more. He fought and pleaded with himself, morning, noon and night, not to drink again, but he could not resist the craving, and at the end of the month, which had been a month of continuous fighting, he had to admit he was a slave to alcohol. He hated himself and trembled to think what the end would be.

The happy hour arrived, and his wife presented him with a healthy boy. It was then that his wife's words came to mind, that their child might be handicapped in the race of life if his father indulged in alcoholic beverages. He felt sick at heart when he reflected what he had done, was doing, and how he had betrayed his wife's confidence. As he looked at the innocent little thing for the first time, he prayed that his boy would not touch the stuff that enslaved him.

They were exceedingly happy and the young mother made many plans for the boy, even to which college he should attend. The father acquiesced in all she said, but she was disappointed he did not have some plans for the boy's future.

Two days after he was a father he was called into the office of the president. He went with fear and trembling, as he knew he had abused his employer's confidence.

“Robert,” the president said, kindly, some time ago you and I had a conversation, and you promised to leave drink alone. You did not keep your word, as your work indicates. I have before me a set of plans and the cost of the same, and you made a mistake that would cost us three thousand dollars, if it had not been discovered. You may recall that I said it was possible for you to fill one of the executive offices if you attended to your work. You may also recall what I said if you did not attend to your duties,” and he looked at Robert, who had turned deathly pale. He waited for an answer.

“I know what you said,” Robert stuttered.

“I am sorry, but you seem determined to pay more attention to drink than to the work for which you are paid. You deliberately threw away all chances of advancement with us and discharged yourself. You will please go to the cashier and get your money,” and the president turned to other matters.

Margaret and the baby came before him and he was speechless. Mr. Williams,” he cried, after a time, “will you give me another chance? I promise you on my word of honor I will leave drink alone.”

“No, my boy, that is impossible. You betrayed me once and you will do it again. I am paying you four thousand a year to do certain work, but for the last six months I had to review it for fear you made an error.

If I must do your work and mine, I might as well do yours in the first place. It pains me beyond words to be so heartless, but I must do it for my self-protection."

Robert staggered from the office.

"There are other places where I can get employment," he said when he reached the street and had regained himself. He made application at a number of establishments. They asked for reference and would let him know in a few days, but he did not hear.

His wife and child came to mind. "She must not know I lost my position." He left every morning at the usual time and returned at the accustomed hour. At the end of two months he was still tramping the streets, when not in a saloon, and he drank more than ever. He made application at every plant in the city, but to no avail. They had no opening after they had investigated and learned his habits. No one knew better than he why he could not secure a position. Despair gripped his heart as his savings ebbed away, and the fear that Margaret would learn he had lost his place and was imbibing was ever before him. "And what will happen when she makes the discovery?" he asked a thousand times a day. The thought drove him almost insane, and he not infrequently entertained ideas of suicide. This would be cowardly, and bring disgrace to his wife, but his insurance would keep her

in comfort, which he seemed to think he could not do after his savings were used up.

The climax came when his wife met him accidentally in the heart of the city, and he was decidedly under the influence of drink. He attempted to apologize on the street, but she was so mortified she could not listen and rushed away and went home. In her home she paced her apartments in confusion. She looked at her son who was sleeping the sleep of innocence. "Will he have a taste for drink, will he be mentally deficient, will he have criminal tendency," these and many similar ideas rushed through her bewildered mind. "Oh! my son, my son," she cried in the agony of her soul as she bent over the little basket. "Oh! that God would take you before you have an opportunity to touch the vile poison that robs you of all that is good and decent."

He returned under the influence of drink and expected her to upbraid him, but she only looked at him in pity and did not say a word. He was weary of his deception and determined to make a clean breast of it.

"Margaret, I want to tell the truth," he said with a heavy tongue.

"Not now, Robert, wait until after a while," she said listlessly.

"I am going to relieve my mind now," and there was an unpleasant gleam in his eyes which she had not seen before. "I deceived

you from the very first. I am a miserable cad for having done so, but I thought I could drink and it would not interfere with my work or my happiness. I was mistaken. I lost my position two months ago, and destroyed my happiness shortly after we were married. I have fallen to the level where I must have it, and if I am denied it I go almost insane."

She listened in silence as he bared his debauched life, and all the hope, aspirations and happiness slid from her like a mantle. She determined not to leave him, as she held the marriage vow too sacred. That suffering was in store for her she knew, but she would endure it.

Now that she knew his real life, he lost all sense of decency and returned nearly every day under the influence of drink. In a short time their savings were used up and they were compelled to move on a side street. They were penniless and he must get work. He finally secured a place with an electrical contractor for twenty dollars a week. At the end of the first week, when he received his pay, he looked at the twenty dollars and then thought of the eighty he received not many weeks before. The contrast made him sick at heart, but he drowned the unpleasant thought in alcohol. Since drink was the first consideration, his wife received very little of his money, and not infrequently she was

hungry, but she never complained. She felt that conditions would be different some time, and she constantly prayed for strength until that time.

An open letter was in the lap of Mary Bergen. She had read the letter three times, and was digesting the contents when her husband came into the dining-room.

"Who is the letter from?" he asked, casually.

"From Margaret."

"And what is the news?"

"They have moved and they are well are the important items."

"You do not seem to be cheered with the letter. Anything wrong you hesitate to mention?"

"No; read the letter," and she handed it to him.

"Just an ordinary every-day letter, and I see no reason why you should look so sad."

"I am depressed about the things she did not say."

"I do not understand. Explain."

"It is a simple matter of deduction. In the first place, their new address is in a neighborhood that is vastly different from where they lived. Why should they move into a cheaper section, if Robert is still holding his position? I fear he has lost his place and they were compelled to move. You see this paper is torn from a writing tablet, in-

stead of the fine linen she always used. There must be a reason for this cheap paper. She does not say anything about Robert or his work, and the baby is mentioned only incidentally. To me, the whole letter has a touch of sadness."

"All imagination."

"Perhaps so, but I am going to see and will leave to-morrow for the city."

"You are foolish; but, if that is the way you feel, all right."

The mother had a presentiment that all was not well with her boy, and she was grieved that her kindly admonitions had not been heeded, and her countless prayers not answered.

The journey to the city was uninteresting, as she was eager to learn if her surmise was correct. The taxicab stopped in a dirty street that swarmed with ill-kept children. Her heart felt faint when she saw the character of the street in which her son lived. She rang the bell, and the door was opened by Margaret. "Mother," she cried, after hesitating just a moment, and threw her arms around her shoulders. Mary saw that the bloom had disappeared from her daughter-in-law's cheeks, that dark circles were under her eyes, and that she lacked the easy and graceful movements of other days. All this the older woman saw in an instant, and she was certain she did not make the journey in vain.

"You do not look well!" the mother said, solicitously.

"Oh! I am perfectly well," but her words did not have a true ring.

"And how is Robert?"

"He is well, and so is the baby."

The mother saw that her daughter-in-law was ill at ease and desisted from asking personal questions, and directed the conversation into other channels. She observed that the home lacked the atmosphere of prosperity and that considerable of the handsome furniture was missing. She would wait and learn why this great change.

As the hour for Robert's return approached the wife became nervous. "He usually comes home at six, but sometimes he must work over-time," she said when it was time for him to make his appearance.

He came in at seven and the wife turned pale when she met him in the hall. He was in his usual condition. The mother was in the act of getting out of her chair, when she saw his shabby suit, his dirty hands and face, the dull look in his eyes, and her heart seemed to freeze. This could not be her son, the boy for whom she prayed daily, the boy for whom she had sacrificed so many comforts, and from whom she expected the highest and best. "No, no," she cried in her heart of hearts, "this is not my boy."

"Robert," she cried with a mother's love.

He looked at her in a dazed sort of a way for a moment. "Mother, this is a surprise," and he held out his hand. She clasped it in both of her's and gazed hard to find the boy she loved. The next instant she got a whiff of his alcoholic breath, and she knew all. She released his hand and sank into her chair weak with pity.

"You must be hungry, my boy, and Margaret is ready to serve," to break the awkward silence.

None had an appetite, as each was busy with his own heart. Robert had to explain and he did not know how. His mind was in a tumult, and his heart ached for the first time in many months when he saw the sorrow in his mother's face.

"I know you have many things to talk about," Margaret said, as they got up from the table, "so you and Robert go into the parlor and I will clear the table." She was relieved when they complied with her wish.

The mother led the way into the room, and Robert followed reluctantly. He closed the door after him.

"My boy," was all she said, as she took his hand in her's. The words were ever so tender, but Robert knew her heart was bleeding, and for the first time he saw clearly how he had betrayed his mother's love and confidence.

He did not answer and they sat in silence

for a long time. He was tormented with many emotions and he debated whether he should tell her the truth or should he laugh at her. The better part of him won, he would be truthful. He could not lose his mother's love and thrust her in deeper sorrow.

"Mother," he finally said, with quivering lips, "you know all and I need not go into detail. I am sorry I did not keep my promise, but I have no one to blame but myself. In a moment of weakness I touched the stuff you hate so much. I liked it—perhaps I had better say I liked the effect—and I drank again and again, but not to excess. I, like many others, thought I could stop when I was so minded. One day, I became disgusted with myself and determined not to touch it again. What I felt when I realized I had lost control of myself is beyond description. Your admonitions came to me, my promise to Margaret rose before me, but I had betrayed both and I am a miserable wretch. I am a beast for making Margaret suffer as she does, but I cannot help myself. You see how colorless her cheeks are, her eyes are lifeless and she is deprived of the comforts she has a right to expect of me. Oh!" he cried in the anguish of his grief, "I would sell my soul if I could restore the love that I destroyed. She never complains and suffers in silence, but she does not love me."

"Would you stop if you could?" the mother asked.

“Stop it if I could!” he fairly shrieked, “do you think for one minute I drink because I love it? No, no, I hate the poison, but it is my master. I have lost all control of myself. I would do anything to be rid of the monster who is destroying me and mine. Stop it! you do not know what you ask, mother.”

“There must be a way of escape, if you suffer like this.”

“Show me the way and I will do all on my part that is possible.”

“And all my pleading with God has been in vain,” as though she was speaking to herself.

“Do not think that I have not prayed to be rid of this evil. But God does not hear me, and I am doomed. I do not complain because I suffer. I deserve it. I am thinking of Margaret and the boy.”

“A way must be found to help you get rid of the habit.”

“And what do you propose, mother?”

“I do not know, my boy. I shall go home in the morning and talk it over with father.”

The mention of his father did not bring any hope, as he could not see how his father could succor him.

Mary Bergen returned home several days before the family expected her.

“Mary,” cried her husband when he came into the kitchen, “you home; what is the cause of this early return, are you unwell, is our boy sick?”

"No, I am not ill."

"Then tell me why you are home so soon. We did not expect you until the end of the week."

"Wait; I will tell you after supper."

During the meal he watched her closely and he saw she was nervous, had no appetite and seemed to have grown older in the few days she was absent. He was eager to learn why she was disturbed, and hurried through the meal.

They went out on the porch and sat in the cool of the evening.

"Now, then," after they were comfortably seated, "do not keep me in suspense any longer."

"I do not know how to tell you," fumbling with her apron, "but it is necessary that you know the whole truth," and she halted, as she could not believe true what she was about to say.

"Come, do not make me wait any longer," impatiently.

"Our boy is addicted to strong drink."

"Our boy is a drunkard, did you say?" in astonishment.

"Yes," she whispered.

He collapsed and leaned back in his chair when he fully grasped the import of his wife's words. This was the first time she had seen her husband give way to his feelings, and she pitied him. Many conflicting emotions had possession of him.

"I cannot believe it, Mary," after a long silence.

"It is true, William. He is an absolute slave to the poison."

"It cannot be true," as though he was talking to himself, "that a Bergen has lost control of himself."

"That saying of yours is rather trite, William. A Bergen can fall as readily as any other person if the temptation is strong enough. The truth remains that our boy has succumbed to the poison, and something must be done to redeem him, and save his wife and child."

"And what would you suggest?"

"I do not know, but I understand there are institutions where they cure people of the habit."

"Those places do not effect permanent cures. They are institutions to take your money from you."

"Then I do not know what to suggest."

"Leave me alone," he said after a long silence. "I must think what can be done. One thing is certain, the boy must regain his manhood."

Mary left him and went into the house.

Being alone, he went over her words again and again, but he could not conceive that a Bergen drank to excess. Still, there must be some truth in it or she would not be agitated. He must see his boy and learn why

he was so great a fool to wreck his manhood and destroy his happiness.

Yes, he would go on the morrow and see for himself. And, after he saw, then what? Something had to be done. He sat for a long time in the gathering darkness, and reviewed his life and his relation with his son. No, he was never affectionate, he never had a heart-to-heart talk with his boy, he never in a fatherly way pointed out the dangers; these and many other things he should have done, as a father, he left undone. He was too busy making money to think about the finer and nobler things of life. Perhaps, if he had had his son's confidence, this misfortune could have been avoided. Perhaps, if he had not been so niggardly, and assisted him, this would not have occurred. All this was of the past, what to do now had to be settled. It was after midnight when he entered the sitting-room, and his wife looked at him in a questioning manner.

"I have a plan in mind, if the boy will submit."

"I am glad you have a way to help the boy. What do you propose doing?"

"I am going to see him to-morrow, and I will not return until I bring him and his family. We have plenty of room, and I am going to give him a room and stay with him until he has regained his self-control. I will stay with him until he can see and smell whisky and not be tempted to taste it."

"Do you think that is possible?"

"I do, if he has a spark of manhood left."

"He will only be too anxious to be cured. But how can you be with him and look after your business?"

"Business can go to the bow-wows, for all I care. Our son is worth more than our business, and we have sufficient if I never do a tap. I am going to devote my time to my son; he must be a man again, and he shall be a man if it takes the rest of my life to make him one. I realize," with regret, "I have not been the kind father I should have been, but he shall not find me wanting in the future."

"William," and for the first time in years she threw her arms around his neck and kissed him, as the tears of joy rolled down her pale cheeks, "I am glad to hear you speak so kindly."

"There, there, mother, it will come all right," as he patted her on the cheeks.

She was proud of him that moment, and she knew he would accomplish his end once he made up his mind.

Robert did not return at the usual hour, and the wife knew what his condition would be. She was nearly distracted as the hours passed and he did not return. The father was plainly impatient, and she feared the greeting between father and son would be none too pleasant. At nine o'clock he leered

into the room and stared at his father; he finally recognized his parent, and greeted him with a heavy voice. The grip of the father's hand, which was none too gentle, had a sobering effect. By the time the evening meal was over the son was fairly sober. Margaret finished her work and retired to her room. For a time, they talked on various topics in an indifferent manner, as each knew what was on the mind of the other.

"Your mother came heart-broken and said you were addicted to the drink habit," the father said abruptly. "I cannot even now believe that you, a Bergen, have lost self-control."

"Just what do you mean by self-control? I have heard you talk about that since I was a boy," and there was sarcasm in his tone.

"I mean for a man to take a drink and leave it alone at will."

"You have not done without it since I know you, and I question if you could do without it for a week if you tried. I do not say this with animosity; I simply mention it because I think it is true. When I first touched it I had your fallacious doctrine in mind and believed it firmly, but the day I was anxious to quit drinking I could not."

For the first time the father questioned if he could go to market and not drink. In his heart of hearts, he knew he eagerly looked forward to the day to go to market, when

he could get his drink. And, to his shame, he had to confess to himself that he liked strong drink, though he never drank to excess. He did not come, however, to think or talk about himself; he came to talk to his son. He could take himself to task at leisure.

"You are only quoting me to defend yourself."

"Not at all, father. Ever since I can remember, I heard you talk of the Bergens' strength of will-power. I sincerely believed I had sufficient, if not more will-power than the majority of Bergens, strength to leave it alone, but I was mistaken. It had the better of me before I was aware of it."

"And what do you think I should have done that would have prevented you from drinking?"

"A number of things. Instead of defending rum, you should have spoken against it. You were never affectionate to me, still I thought you a great man and what you did must be right. I knew you drank and upheld the sale of it, and I considered it right because you did."

"Then you drink because I do?"

"Precisely. Listen, father," and he was in dead earnest, "if you had talked against it instead of for it, if you had fought it instead of defended the sale of it, I firmly believe I would not have fallen to where I am."

"How did I ever uphold the sale of it?" with slight anger.

“You have signed hotel applications for licenses for years. Is that not an indirect means of helping the sale of rum? You stand on the side of whisky, and with it all you are a good church official. Just how you can reconcile rum and the Gospel I do not understand. To tell the truth, father, and I say it with all respect, I think you are a poor candidate to talk temperance.”

“If you and every other father stood up for temperance,” he continued before his father could reply, “wrecks like me would be scarce. If you and every other father refused to sign liquor applications, there would be no hotels. You fathers are indifferent to this vital question because you love to indulge your appetites, and, when one of your sons falls by the way, you upbraid him. It is hardly consistent, is it? You fathers do not seem to think you have any obligations to fulfil toward your sons. If you fathers permit the evil, you must pay the price. And are you not, this minute, paying a stupendous price for your attitude toward this question?”

The father was undone. Never had he seen his actions in so clear a light, and he questioned if his boy would have touched it if he had opposed the evil instead of defending it. The opportunity to help his son seemed to slip from him, as he realized he was not the one to help his boy because he

indulged in the thing he wanted his son to quit. The father paced the floor in silence. "Stop drinking, yourself, and then you can help your boy," the suggestion startled him. The tumult in his mind and heart increased. "A Bergen surrender, and to his son? No; he could not bare his life to his son," but the fight did not diminish and after a time it was self-evident he must surrender or lose his son.

"Robert," the father said, greatly agitated, as he took him by the shoulders and looked him square in the eyes, "I have been a determined and arrogant man all my life. I defended rum—not that I did not know its attending evil. I knew that rum and the Gospel did not go hand-in-hand, but I was too cowardly to fight rum. I knew I betrayed my obligations as a church official, but I would not acknowledge it. Do not think for a minute I never reviewed my attitude, but I boasted I was a Bergen and never changed. I see my folly, and the price is the manhood of my son. God," he cried, "what a fool I have been. Look at me, boy; I solemnly swear that from this hour I will not touch whisky again."

Immediately the son had more respect for his father, for he knew the surrender cost him much, and he felt his father would keep his promise.

"My boy, do you believe what I said?"

"I do."

And the barrier that had always existed between father and son was removed, and they were on a common footing ready to fight a common enemy.

"May I help you now, my boy?"

"I fear I am beyond help," miserably.

"Do you want to be rid of the habit?"

"Do I?" he groaned. "Do you think I drink because I love it? I hate the stuff, but I must have it."

"You have not lost all manhood, and there is a chance to fight this to a successful finish. You must regain your self-control and take your place in society as a sober and industrious man," the father said with rising hopes.

"And how shall we do this?"

"You and yours must go home with me."

"No, that is impossible. I would not want our friends to know your son had fallen so low."

"You must do as I have planned, if you want me to help you. You go home with me, and you and I will live in one room until you are cured of the habit. The neighbors and friends will be told you are sick and need constant attention."

Each was busy with his own mind for some time.

"I do not know how you will go about it, father, but I am ready to do as you direct. All I want is to get rid of this awful disease."

In three days they left the city, and arrived in the quiet village after it had retired for the night. Robert and his father installed themselves in the largest and pleasantest room in the house. The real fight was about to begin.

For the first three months the boy was in constant torment. The father would not increase his drink; instead he reduced it. Robert pleaded and begged for more, but the father would not yield. At the end of nine months, the boy had sufficient control of himself that he could have it before him all day and not touch it. He next requested his father to remove it from the room that he could not see or smell it.

"Well, father," the son asked at the end of a year, "do I look like a man again?"

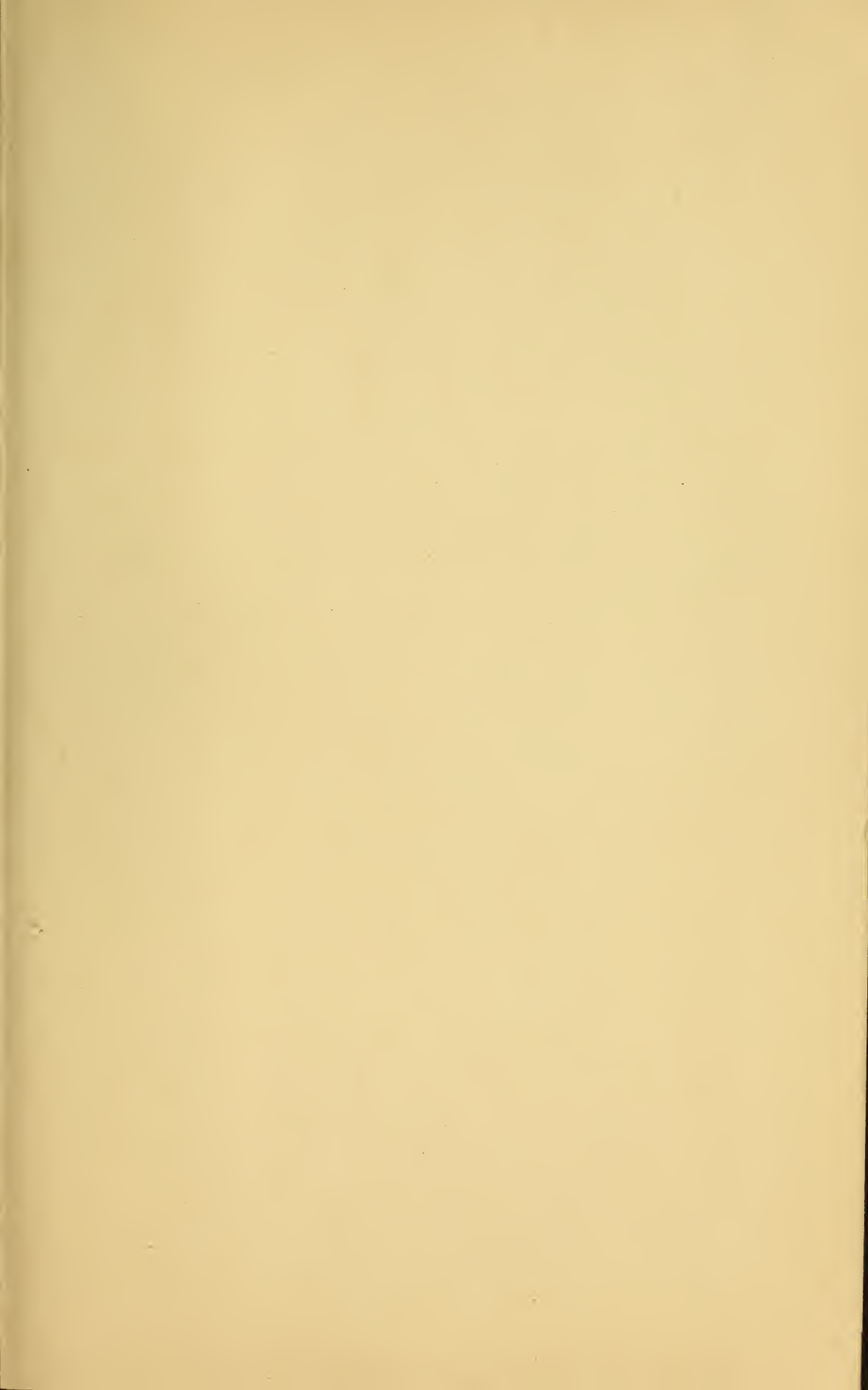
"You do, my boy," with pride such as he had never shown toward his boy.

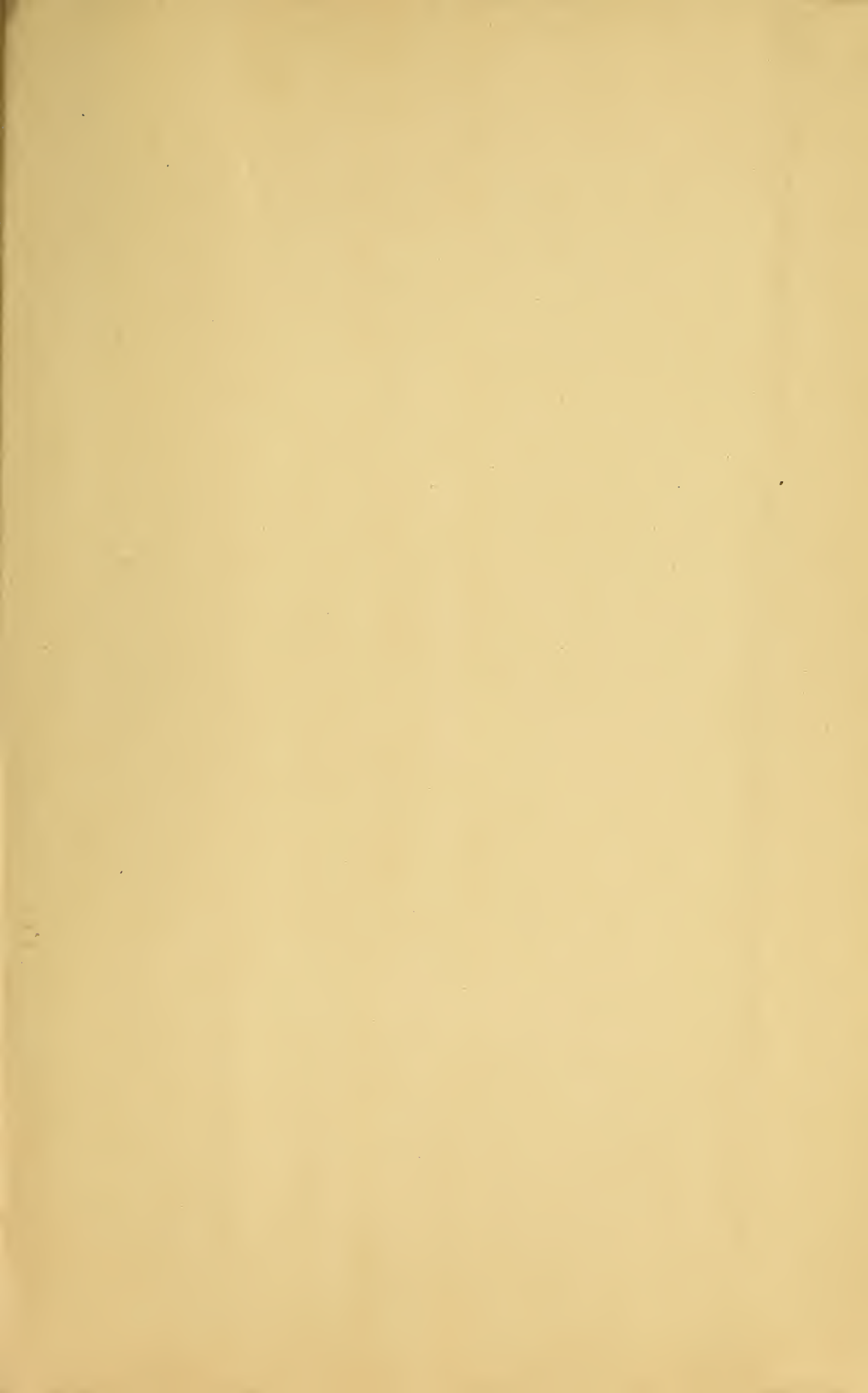
"I feel like one, and I see the fool I have been. I want to thank you for having taken me in hand, for I am afraid to think what might have happened if you had not. I rejoice that I am redeemed from the awful curse. Margaret has regained her health and, I believe, is happy, and so is mother. I am still a young man and am not afraid to start again, though my folly has left scars that time cannot remove. All that I am and ever expect to be I owe to you."

"I have only done what every father should do."

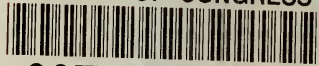
“And what is your attitude toward the question now?”

“My son,” he said with sincerity, “it shall not again be said that I, directly or indirectly, helped the sale of rum. I am a champion of sobriety. A Bergen can change his mind.”





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